

Book Reviews

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PEDIATRICS—Edited by Harold M. Maurer, MD, Professor and Chairman, Department of Pediatrics, Children's Medical Center, Medical College of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. Churchill Livingstone, Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, 1983. 1,038 pages, \$32.50.

This is the first edition of a new textbook of pediatrics, written almost exclusively by authors from the Medical College of Virginia. In his preface, the editor highlights the difficulty that medical students have with current textbooks of pediatrics in "distinguishing fundamental subject matter . . . from more specialized information . . ." in their study of pediatrics. This text is proposed as an alternative to both the encyclopedic pediatric textbook and the shorter handbooks or manuals. As the book is identified as not being a reference text or a replacement for more comprehensive textbooks, it seems that its real purpose is as an alternative to the shorter texts often used by students who wish to obtain a basic overview of the field. The major points of this review will be an evaluation of its content and the degree to which it succeeds in providing an alternative to texts already available.

The 49 contributors have produced a book containing 34 chapters and a section on laboratory values with age-adjusted norms. There are sections on the major subspecialty areas of pediatrics, pediatric surgery and the surgical specialties, radiology, drug therapy, primary care and the social and emotional problems of children. Each chapter is concluded by a reference section, usually consisting of reference books, review compendia, and occasional journal articles. Most chapters include black-and-white photographs, diagrams, graphs and charts to supplement the text. Organization of the subject matter in individual chapters has clearly been left to the authors and the result is uneven. Some authors have written an introduction to the material and followed it with a clearly outlined approach to specialties in pediatrics, whereas others present material in a scattered fashion which will be of little use to beginning students of pediatrics. Unfortunately, it is this uneven quality that causes this effort to fall short of its mark.

Those chapters that are well constructed will clearly be valuable to students and others who need a basic overview of a topic. For example, the section on immunologic disorders clearly defines the role of the immune system in disease prevention, reviews basic immunologic pathophysiology, outlines the major immune deficiency states by clinical and laboratory measurements and presents material on differential diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. Other chapters, including ones on the cardiovascular and hematologic systems, neoplastic diseases, newborn infants, immunizations, development, genetics, major organ system failure and prevention and care of injury, similarly present material in a way that will be of value to readers with a wide range of training and experience.

The remaining chapters, although containing useful information, suffer from poor organization or spotty treatment of significant topics in pediatrics. For example, the otherwise well-written section on infectious disease begins abruptly with a section on *Hemophilus influenzae* infection. While this is clearly a major area of importance in pediatric infectious disease, the beginning student would be better served by an introduction which highlights the important position that infectious problems occupy in the health care of children. Many other sections would benefit from an approach that considers the perspective of the reader who is likely to use the book.

Finally, there are some statements with which many would disagree. In the chapter on ear, nose and throat, the use of ampicillin is recommended for treatment of epiglottitis, with no mention or consideration of resistant *H influenzae*. The chapter on skin disease identifies *Staphylococcus aureus* as "the most likely primary pathogen" in impetigo. Additionally, there are significant omissions of important topics in pediatrics. The sudden infant death syndrome merits but one mention, with no discussion, and the subjects of apnea, abnormal control of respiration and home monitoring are completely omitted. While the book does not claim to be a comprehensive text, these are major topics in child health care to which students should be exposed.

In summary, this is a first edition whose purpose is to provide students with a core of basic information or to serve as a suitable review text for the practitioner who cares for children. Some chapters do an excellent job of providing a well-outlined framework in a clear, concise manner. The majority, however, suffer from either a lack of focus or an incomplete treatment of their subject matter. Currently, there exist textbooks that are comparable in size to this but are more uniform in presenting a "nonencyclopedic" overview of pediatrics. The key to improving this book in subsequent editions would be to use those successful chapters as a model for the rest in terms of defining objectives, outlining the subject and reviewing major disease entities.

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SEXUAL PRACTICES, THE STORY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY—Edgar Gregerson, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Queens College, City University of New York. Franklin Watts, Inc., 730 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019, 1983. \$18.95.

If we can accept Gregerson's statement that sex began 2,000,000,000 years ago, then it is high time an anthropological study be done.

That is exactly what Professor Edgar Gregerson has produced. It is a remarkable book, a first, the result of five years of research.

In 1948 Kinsey's Report surprised us with revelations of the intimate sexual habits of the American public. Now, in 1984, Gregerson has compiled a detailed cross-cultural study of the sexual themes, ideologies and customs that have come down to us through the centuries of human progress. It, too, contains surprises.

One does not need to be a student of anthropology to enjoy this book. The reader will be given a new perspective. If we have concerns about sexual permissiveness, women's lib, gay lib or the recent swing toward "unisex," or asexual androgyny, we have only to dip into this unusual book to learn that all this has happened before.

Gregerson writes with a light touch, wittily and with objectivity. This is not "soft-core porn"; the text and the illustrations remind us that sexual artifacts and eroticism have had a pervading influence on sexual themes and societal cultures for all these centuries. Perhaps even for 2 billion years.

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